

PROFESSIONALS IN COMMAND IN F.A. CUP CLASH

By Argus

Watford 5; Wycombe Wan. 1

BRAVE amateur hearts were no substitute for professional class at Vicarage-road, Watford, on Saturday. A record-breaking 23,907 crowd cheered Wycombe Wanderers' enthusiasm to the echo, but when it came to cool, calculated soccer skill and controlled power there was only one team in it—Fourth Division Watford.

Mr. Ron Burgess' so-cool, so-strong, so-confident team had all the trump cards—supercharged thrust at wing half; slim wizard Barry Hartle, a conjuring demon of an inside forward to mark; tough-as-nails centre-half Vince McNeice and goal-hungry forwards Dennis Uphill and £10,000 Cliff Holton.

Against these talents one Wycombe man stood out like the Beachy Head lighthouse on a stormy night—young John Beck who played a "dream" game at right-back, surely his best-ever performance for the club.

APPRECIATION

All the Wanderers boys ran their legs off in the quest for cup glory but it was Beck's competence and canny handling of the skilful Watford outside-left Freddie Bunce which had even the match-hardened Fleet Street critics clucking with appreciation.

For two minutes only did fighting-all-the-time Wanderers have a real chance of a "giant-killer." In the 20th minute a Dennis Atkins free-kick made Watford fans pale with alarm as it cracked into the back of Jimmy Linton's net to equalise an earlier Uphill goal.

Then, within a few seconds, came the one-and-only opportunity to shake the cocky pros off their perch. Paul Bates, in a flash of Wisbech form, left McNeice gasping behind him on the right wing, beat another man on the line and centered across a stricken Watford goalmouth. Tragically, none of the Wycombe forwards within whispering distance were quick enough to whip the ball in and a Watford defender was able to smash the ball to safety.

TURNED ON STEAM

With this escape behind them, Watford quickly strangled the bite if not the resistance out of the amateurs. Once Uphill and Holton had shot them into a two-goal lead it was really only a question of how many the professionals would win by. Just like a good, lazy heavyweight, Watford turned on the steam whenever they felt like it and when they did Wycombe's plucky defence had no answer.

Superior in all phases of the game, Watford had a centre-forward in Uphill who could snap up half chances in the grand manner, and he was the real match-winner.

Chasing hard and often to bolster a highly-suspect Wycombe defence, John Fisher joined Beck as the best of the Wycombe rearguard. There was any amount of covering to do. Watford inside men Holton and Hartle had the beating of Ron Fryer and Jim Truett throughout the game, while Jimmy Moring gave far too much room to Mike Benning, who ran the Watford right wing as if his name was Pigalle Wonder.

"IFFY" DENNIS

Added to these trouble-spots, Dennis Syrett looked nervous and was at fault with two of the Watford goals and extremely lucky to get away with at least one first half escapade.

Critics of the Wycombe wing choice could be excused for a certain "I told you so" attitude. There was never an effective challenge to Watford's goal from either flank.

Gallantly though he played, Gerald Free was "lost" in this company and just hadn't the know-how and experience to cope with full-back Price while Dennis Atkins, who replaced Michael Rockell on the right wing, could only find one of the Thor-fashioned shots in his armoury and, this apart, did very little.

ONE MAN FORCE

Pick of the Wycombe forwards were Paul Bates, who was forced to roam wide by the attentive McNeice, and Cliff Trott, a one-man invasion force in the second half.

The Wanderers began splendidly, wing halves racing into attack with the forwards, the ball moving sweetly towards the Watford goal. Then a ninth-minute goal by Uphill shattered the illusion and brought the Wanderers' supporters back to earth.

As swift as a dagger, Hartle side-stepped and dummied past two Wycombe defenders and his final pass left Uphill clear to smash a handsome drive past Syrett.

The fantastic Uphill—manager Burgess disclosed after the game that he was still shaking off a stomach disorder—sent yet another blistering shot over the Wanderers' crossbar from the touchline.

ATKINS LESSON

Rough, two-footed tackling by the Watford defenders had the referee whistling persistently as Wycombe began to press. Bates was left winded and writhing on the ground after one tackle by McNeice and another home foul preceded the equalising goal: Atkins' mighty free-kick taught Watford a lesson as it knocked Linton's fingers back en route to the net.

The professionals made hay of Wycombe's defence in the 20 minutes immediately before half-time. Holton hit a corking drive into Syrett's arms and Uphill missed a sit-up-and-beg chance after the goalkeeper had dropped the ball. Cliff Holton swept the ball round Syrett and then rolled the ball wide of an open goal—and then Wycombe had their biggest let-off, when Benning cracked a shot against a post and a thankful goalkeeper grabbed the rebound.

QUICK GOALS

A beautiful header by Uphill and a solo dribble by Holton secured two Watford goals in three minutes, just before half-time.

Wycombe hopes of a recovery were soon shot down in flames by an incredible goal from Vince McNeice. The Watford centre-half skied the ball hopelessly goalwards and saw it sail over the head of the surprised Syrett.

With a three-goal lead Watford went on the soft pedal and the Wanderers were allowed to hustle away, chiefly through the intrepid Trott. But the nearest they went to scoring was when Free's centre was kicked off the goal-line by full back Nicholas.

HOLTON CRACKERJACK

Two penalties in the final ten minutes saw the end of the scoring. Sammy Chung whipped Bates' legs from under him in the home penalty area but Paul sent a tame spot-kick almost straight at Linton.

Not so, Cliff Holton. When the Watford giant was given a last minute pot at goal, after Fryer had fouled him in the Wycombe area, he hammered the fastest shot of the game past Syrett.

Verdict: Watford won easily enough and the score by no means flatters them. But Wycombe earned plenty of plaudits through sheer hard work and courage.